VHA OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Fidelity & Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness: Optimizing Care

June 6, 2022

Prepared by:

VA Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Training Program VISN 5 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC)





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Agenda for Today's Call

1. Define treatment fidelity

2. Discuss why fidelity is important and how it's measured

3. Review factors that may impact fidelity

Explore tools to establish and maintain SST fidelity



What is Treatment Fidelity?

 "The degree to which a treatment was delivered as intended" (Perepletchikova & Kazdin, 2005)

 Also referred to as treatment integrity, treatment adherence, intervention integrity



How is Fidelity Measured?

- Objective measures are used to assess the fidelity of psychotherapies and psychosocial interventions.
- For example, The Social Skills Group Observation Checklist is used to assess fidelity to the SST model.

Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST (page 1 of 2) Group Leader:_______ Date:_____ Consultant:_____ Instructions: Complete this checklist after observing the group leader conduct a session. For each item, check off whether the group leader performed this skill "not at all", "partially", or

General structuring and positive Not at all Partially Fully engagement skills Created a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Spoke clearly, using a voice neither overloud nor oversoft. Established an agenda and maintained the structure of the Provided ample positive feedback for participation. Redirected group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic. using a kind but firm voice. Asked group members for examples of personal experiences in which skills could be or were used. Used a shaping approach to help members gradually learn new social skills by reinforcing small steps toward the targeted skill. Encouraged group members to be actively involved in the session. (Members can be active in different ways, such as reading the steps of the skill out loud, providing a rationale, providing feedback for role plays, participating in role plays, contributing examples of personal experience.)

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SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST (page 2 of 2)

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Reviewed homework from the previous group session.			/
Established a rationale for using the skill.			/
Discussed the steps of the skill with group members.			/
Modeled the skill in a role-play.			/
Reviewed the model with the group members.			/
Engaged all group members in a role-play of the skill.			/
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific positive feedback for each group member's role-play.			/
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role-play.			/
Assigned specific homework to practice the skill outside the group.			/

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Why is Fidelity Important?

- EBP without fidelity would not be an EBP
- Fidelity is linked to outcomes
 - -For example, clients in SST Groups showed improved overall social skills and independent living skills (Kurtz & Mueser, 2008; Turner et al., 2018).
- Providing quality care to Veterans





Factors that Impact Fidelity







Poll Question

Poll Question: What interferes or may interfere with leading your SST Groups to fidelity?





Factors that Impact Fidelity

"However, there is a tension between fidelity and the necessity for many therapists to adapt EBTs to his or her patients or circumstances of delivery."

(Andersen and Dorfman, 2016)





Factors that Impact Fidelity

Clinical setting

Client factors

Therapist factors

Fidelity Drift

Tools to Establish and Maintain SST Fidelity





Poll Question

Poll Question: What tools and/or resources are you using to help maintain SST Fidelity (Check all that apply)?

- A) Social Skills Training Quick Guide
- B) Bellack et al. 2004 SST Manual
- C) Social Skills Group Observation Checklist
- D) Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version
- E) CPRS Note Templates
- F) I do not use any tools or resources





Resources

- Bellack, A. S., Mueser, K. T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). Social skills training for schizophrenia: A step-bystep guide. 2nd Edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- SST Overview and Refresher Webcourse
- Social Skills Training Quick Guide
- SST Facilitators Guide
- Role Play Buddy Guide
- Social Skills Group Observation Checklist
- Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version
- SST CPRS Notes Templates





SST Facilitator Training

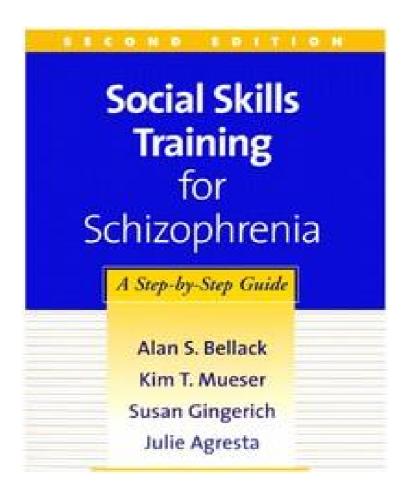
Didactics

Experiential Learning Session

6 months of consultation

VA SST Training Model

Bellack, A. S., Mueser, K. T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). Social skills training for schizophrenia: A step-by-step guide. 2nd Edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.







SST Overview and Refresher Webcourse

- What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher
 - -TMS Link: What is Social Skills Training for Serious

 Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher (VA

 TMS Item #37842)
 - -Train Link (all public access): https://www.train.org/vha/course/1086072/
- Includes helpful overview of SST
- Can obtain CEs

Sociocultural Factors and SST

From Bellack et al. (2004):

- "A major error that leaders can make when conducting social skills groups is to operate under the assumption that different cultural groups employ the same verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication." (p. 99)
- "Clients who learn from models that are out of touch with the nuances of their particular sociocultural group or who are reinforced for behaviors that are maladaptive are unlikely to develop the social skills that are necessary for effective living within their community." (p. 99)
- "Leaders need to be sensitive to the sociocultural factors relevant to the clients with whom they are working and must be able to modify the skills taught so that they accommodate the differences in lifestyles, values, norms, and preferences." (p. 99)





Sociocultural Factors and SST

- Maintain the SST Group Structure, AND...
- Be able to <u>modify the skills taught</u> so that they accommodate the differences in lifestyles, values, norms, and preferences.



SST Quick Guide

Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Quick Guide

Preparing for SST Group Sessions

- √ Review SST Group Session Sequence (in this guide)
- √ Review the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist (SSGOC) or the SSGOC Detailed Anchor Points Version
- √ Review skill in SST book (starting p. 193; including reading rationale, becoming familiar with steps, reading sample role play scenarios, and special considerations)
- √ Copy handouts with skill title and steps only from SST website (see last page for link)
- √ Prepare and copy outside practice sheets
- √ When applicable, prepare and copy measurement based care measures for group members to complete prior to group session starting
- √ Have a list of group members' SST Goals
- √ Assign leaders to primary and secondary (if have two leaders); discuss tasks and roles related to primary and secondary group leaders and plan the model scenario
- √ Prepare room (e.g., chairs in semi-circle facing board, prop flip chart/dry erase board)
- √ Check audio recorder settings and conduct a test recording (if applicable)

Note About the Very First SST

For your very first group you will also want to add to beginning of the agenda:

- Introductions of group leaders and group members
- Review of group purpose and structure (You may need to repeat this in subsequent groups as well)
- 3. Discuss how <u>sociocultural factors</u> will be integrated in group
- 4. Discuss group expectations
- Provide the opportunity for group members to <u>share individual goals</u> with the group
- You will <u>not Review Outside Practice</u> in the very first group as the group members will not yet have been assigned practice prior to starting the group.

SST and Recovery Goal for SST

Always keep in mind that Social Skills Training is a Recovery-Oriented Treatment. Therefore, in every session you should encourage and empower the group member to move forward with their recovery and the goal identified for SST. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website states that "Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential." Goal setting is an important part of the recovery process and is a core part of SST. Remember that tracking goals is an important part of SST. Refer to your training materials on how to track group member's progress on their goals.

Sociocultural & Linguistic Factors in SST

"Social skills are the interpersonal behaviors that are socially sanctioned in a given community, and are therefore influenced by the specific sociocultural features of that community" (p. 98, Bellack et. al, 2004). Effectiveness of SST is related to social, cultural, and linguistic factors. These factors can be integrated throughout the group session sequence (e.g., establishing rationale, setup role plays, etc.).

Sample Group Expectations

(with recovery-oriented sample presentation)
-Stay on the group topic. ("Staying on the group topic will help make sure we have time for everyone to practice.")

-Respect individual differences and differences of opinion; no criticizing or making fun of each other. ("No criticizing or making fun of each other. It's important to remember that feedback in SST focuses on what people do well.")

-Respect group members' social, cultural, and linguistic differences. ("Listen when others share their cultural backgrounds. Do not judge or be critical of differences. Social skills may vary based on your background and the social situation. Also, no use of discriminatory language. We want everyone to be safe and valued in the group.")
-Only one person may speak at a time. ("Only one person speaking at a time promotes respect for what everyone has to say.")
-No name-calling or cursing. ("No name-calling or cursing. Let's wort together to make sure that SST group is a positive experience for

-No eating during group. ("Please no eating during group. We have found that eating in group can distract from practice and people giving meaningful feedback.")

-Please turn cell phones off or onto silent during group. ("Turning off cell phones helps show respect for each other's time and efforts in the group.")





SST Group Session Sequence

Welcome and Set Agenda

- Step 1: Review outside practice (for sessions other than the first session)
- Step 2: Establish a rationale for the skill
- Step 3: Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale
- Step 4: Explain the steps of the skill
- Step 5: Model the skill, review with members
- Step 6: Have a group member role play
- Step 7: Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback
- Step 8: Have the member role play again
- Step 9: Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback
- Step 10: Repeat role play again and elicit/provide positive feedback
- Step 11: Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member
- Step 12: Develop outside practice assignments





SST Facilitator and Role Play Buddy Guides

Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Role Play Buddy (RPB) Guide

Individuals that can be SST Role Play Buddies include...

- Providers trained in SST
- Providers not trained in SST
- · Peer Support Specialists
- Students/interns

SST Facilitator Responsibilities to the Role Play Buddy:

- Prior to the first SST session, provides copies of the RPB guide and the SST Quick Guide to the RPB and meets with RPB to review these guides and explain group procedures. Describes SST groups as being positive, welcoming, and encouraging, and answers any questions.
- Provides RPB with web course information, "What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher." Completing the web course is encouraged but not required for the RPB.
- Prior to the first SST session, brief the RPB about the group members' goals.
- Meets with RPB prior to sessions to plan model scenario, then clearly states model scenario immediately before starting the model with RPB in group session.
- Sets up role plays and makes sure the group member and RPB clearly understand roles in the scenario and the plan before starting role plays. Emphasizes who the RPB is pretending to be and the basic plan for what RPB will say.
- Clearly states the focus for second/third role plays before beginning so that the RPB understands their role in those role plays.

Role Play Buddy Responsibilities:

- Meets with the SST Facilitator prior to beginning SST to make sure they are clear on SST group procedures; may also observe an SST session.
- Highly encouraged (but not required) to complete the web course "What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher" prior to helping with SST.
- Prior to each session, meets briefly with the SST Facilitator to plan together the model scenario and possible role play scenarios for group members.
- Respects that SST sessions are highly structured and supports the SST Facilitator and structure by not speaking off-topic or encouraging too much discussion.
- Has a basic knowledge of the group session sequence and is able to follow along with it using the SST Quick
- Helps the SST Facilitator model the skill in a brief, simple role play focused on the steps of the skill. The SST Facilitator models the steps of the skill.
- Follows the instructions of the SST Facilitator provided in role play set-up. If the SST Facilitator inadvertently does not set up role play before beginning, the RPB can prompt set-up, e.g., "What situation are we role playing?"
- Provides opportunities in role plays encouraging the group member to use the steps of the skill (e.g., pausing to allow the group member to do the steps; allowing time for the SST Facilitator to use the steps on the board to prompt the group member).
- Gives a positive/neutral response to the group member in role plays when applicable (e.g., "Sounds good! I can look into your request.").
- Joins in applause after role plays and at every opportunity in the session.
- Gives brief, specific, positive feedback to group members about role play performance when appropriate (e.g., "Your eye contact really was great!").
- Follows instructions from the SST Facilitator on how to alter second and third role plays, if applicable.
- Has fun in SST!

SST FACILITATOR ROLES GUIDE: 2 VS. 1 TRAINED SST GROUP FACILITATORS

2 TRAINED SST FACILITATORS LEADING AN SST GROUP:

Typically switch off being Primary and Secondary facilitator from group to group. Secondary facilitator can help manage group emergencies and challenges so Primary Facilitator can implement the group session sequence. The list of tasks to be accomplished by each facilitator role in an SST session is noted below.

Roles of Primary and Secondary Facilitators in SST Sessions

Welcome Group and Set Agenda: Primary

Step 1. Review outside practice: Primary

- Step 2. Establish a rationale for the skill: Primary
- Step 3. Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale: *Primary; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate*
- Step 4. Explain the steps of the skill: Primary leads reading/discussion of steps; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate
- Step 5. Model the skill; review with members: Primary demonstrates the skill and Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads review of model
- Step 6. Have a group member role play: Primary assists Veteran in role play set up and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy
- Step 7. Elicit and provide feedback: Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate
- Step 8. Have the member role play again: Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy
- Step 9. Elicit and provide feedback: Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate
- Step 10. Repeat role play again and elicit/provide feedback: Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate
- Step 11. Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member: Same roles as in Steps 6-10
- Step 12. Develop outside practice assignments: Primary

1 TRAINED SST FACILITATOR LEADING AN SST GROUP:

- Reminder that if you are the only trained SST facilitator leading the group, you might ask a staff
 member to be a Role Play Buddy (RPB). There is a separate SST Role Play Buddy Guide to help orient
 the staff member to this role.
- If you are leading the group alone without a staff member as a RPB, for Step 5 (Model the Skill), you
 might ask a group member to role play with you while you model the skill. Ideally, ask the group
 member before the group session starts so you can practice the model with them. For the remainder
 of group (Steps 6-11), you should both lead the group and be the RPB.
- SST Facilitator helps set up the role play and makes sure the group member and RPB is clear on the
 roles in the scenario and the plan before starting role plays.





SST, COVID-19, and Fidelity Considerations

- All components of SST can still be completed with fidelity despite COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions.
- For example, outside practice may be completed but may involve another role play with a provider if the group member has limited social interactions.

Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

Group Leader:		(Date:	
Consultant:		_		
Instructions: Complete this chee				
4.				
General structuring and po engagement skills	N	ot at all	Partially	Fully
Created a warm, welcoming				
atmos _p				
Spoke clearly, using a voice overloud nor oversoft.	neither			/
Established an agenda and maintained the structure of th session.				
Provided ample positive feed participation.	fback for			/
Redirected group members v interrupted or strayed from the using a kind but firm voice.	ne topic,			\
Asked group members for ex of personal experiences in w skills could be or were used.	hich			/
Used a shaping approach to members gradually learn new skills by reinforcing small ste toward the targeted skill.	v social ps			/
Encouraged group members actively involved in the sessi (Members can be active in di ways, such as reading the st the skill out loud, providing a rationale, providing feedback plays, participating in role pla contributing examples of per experience.)	on. fferent eps of for role sys,			/

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST (page 1 of 2)

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SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST (page 2 of 2)

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Reviewed nomework from the previous group session.			/
Established a rationale for using the skill.			/
Discussed the steps of the skill with group members.			/
Modeled the skill in a role-play.			/
Reviewed the model with the group members.			/
Engaged all group members in a role-play of the skill.			/
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific positive feedback for each group member's role-play.			/
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role-play.			/
Assigned specific homework to practice the skill outside the group.			/

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Overview of the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

- This tool determines if the group is being led to fidelity.
- The Checklist is comprised of two main areas:
 - –1) General Structuring and Positive Engagement Skills (items 1-8)
 - -2) Steps of Social Skills Training (items 9-17)
- Items under each area are rated as: "Not at all," "Partially," or "Fully."
- Rate SST facilitator behavior throughout the group session (e.g., a facilitator may not engage group members during one small part of the group session, but in general they do engage the group members).





Overview of the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

- Fidelity for an SST Group is defined in the VA SST Training Program as 80% or more of the items on the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist (SSGOC) being rated "Fully" and none are scored at "Not at all."
- The SSGOC: Detailed Anchor Points Version was developed to facilitate rating reliability and fidelity. This document includes specific behavioral descriptors for each item and has been updated so that it is even more specific and helpful in rating group sessions.



Updated Social Skills Group Observation **Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version**

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST:

DETAILED ANCHOR POINTS VERSION (3/7/22)

Group Leader:	Date:
Consultant:	Skill:
For each item, check off whether the group leader	g an audio recording of or observing a group leader (i.e., the primary facilitator) conducting a session. performed this skill "Not at all", "Partially", or "Fully." Please be sure to review carefully notes in each

column and the Important Guidelines for Making Ratings section at the end of this document prior to making ratings. The first session of a group series has special rating instructions that are detailed in the Important Guidelines section.

General structuring and positive engagement skills	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Created a warm, welcoming atmosphere.	No statements welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring validation; no warm voice tone used. Some examples of statements projecting warmth include "it's so good to see everyone here today," "glad you could make it today," "ft's so great to hear that you are moving forward on your goals" and similar.	At least one statement welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring/validation and warm voice tone is used for most of the session.	Several statements to the group welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring/validation using a warm tone of voice. Consistently projects warmth.
2. Spoke clearly, using a voice neither overloud nor oversoft.	Many statements were either not clear and/or many statements are overloud or oversoft.	Some statements are not clear and/or some statements are overloud or oversoft.	All (or virtually all) statements throughout the group are clear and voice is consistently at an appropriate volume (neither overloud or oversoft).
3. Established an agenda and maintained the structure of the session. (Note: The agenda for the first session is typically more elaborate than for subsequent sessions given	Neither established an agenda nor maintained the structure of the session or only one of these items was done partially.	Either did one item completely but not both (i.e., established the agenda and maintained the structure of the session) or did both items partially.	Did both items completely (i.e., established the agenda and maintained the structure of the session). An agenda may be as brief as announcing the skill that will be taught in the group. The structure of the session is maintained when every step of social skills training is followed in order (i.e., there are

General structuring and	Not at all	Partially	Fully
positive engagement skills	Notatan	Faitially	,
the need to orient group			no ratings of "Not at all" for Items 9-17 and
members to the			these steps are done in the proper order).
intervention, etc. To			
receive a fully on the first			
session, the agenda setting			
needs to reflect this			
complexity. Also, consider			
time management and			
whether the facilitator			
tends to go off topic or			
sticks to the agenda and			
structure.)			
4. Provided ample positive feedback for participation. (Note: The behaviorally specific positive feedback that is given/elicited after role plays is rated separately in item #15.)	No or little positive feedback (e.g., reinforcement or praise).	Some positive feedback but not consistently throughout the group.	Consistent and ample positive feedback. Throughout the session, used many opportunities to provide positive feedback to group members for attending the group session and contributing in positive ways, such as offering a rationale, reading the steps, coming up to role play, giving appropriate feedback on role plays, etc.
5. Redirected group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic, using a kind but firm voice. (Note: Please rate whether the group leader makes appropriate attempts to redirect, not whether the group member is fully responsive to these attempts.)	Did not redirect group members who got off topic or interrupted.	Redirected group members at times but also missed significant opportunities to redirect group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic. Or, consistently redirected without a kind voice.	Consistently, quickly, and politely redirected group members who strayed from the topic or interrupted to get them back on track. Also, if no redirection is needed in this group, rate "Fully" for this item.

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Rating Scenarios on the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

- The behavioral descriptors can help facilitate rating your groups.
- Let's take a closer look at the Social Skills
 Group Observation Checklist: Detailed
 Anchor Points Version using some sample
 scenarios.
- We have sample scenarios from an SST group session on the following slides and we will discuss how you would rate the items on the Detailed Anchor Points Version.





Rating Scenario #1

Item #16 "Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role play."

After the first role play for each group member, the facilitator provides specific and behavioral constructive feedback (i.e., "even better feedback"). After the 2nd role play for each group member, the facilitator only encourages the group members to try again for practice without providing or asking about specific ways to make the role play even better. The facilitator says "Well, let's just role play again and give it a try." How would you rate item #16?





Rating Scenario #2

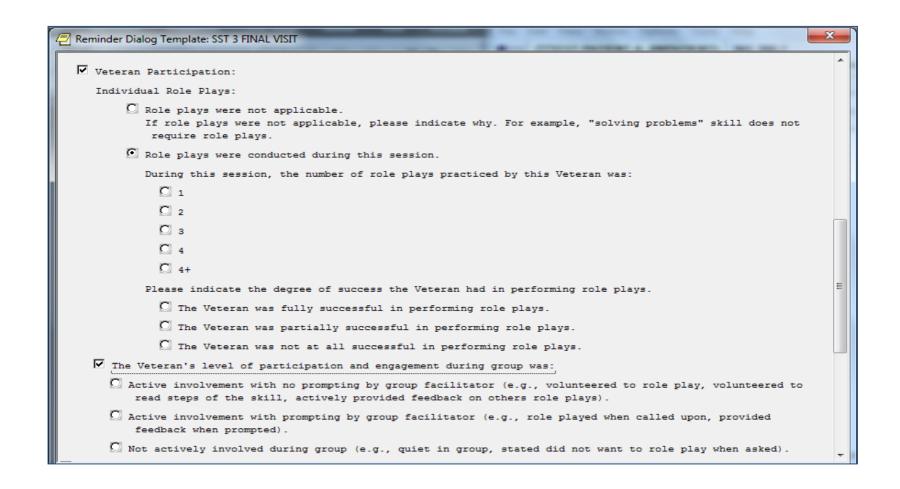
Item #17 "Assigned specific outside practice for the skill taught."

Each of the group members share they will not have the opportunity to practice because they will not be seeing many people in the following week. The group facilitator nods and moves on to end group. They say, "Ok, that's fine. You all practiced today in group so just see if something comes up this week." How would you rate item #17?





SST CPRS Note Templates







Reviewing Veteran Goals and Progress

Veteran outcomes in group

Individual sessions



 Incorporating goals into role plays and outside practice assignments



Other Ideas to Maintain Fidelity

- Ask an SST trained colleague or SST Regional Master Trainer (RMT) to observe group
- Attend advanced quarterly calls
- Attend additional SST Webinars on advanced topics
- Attend SST-Telehealth Community of Practice Call



Other Ideas to Maintain Fidelity

 Contact the SST Training Program Staff-we are available!

Visit the SST MIRECC website:

https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social_skills.asp





Make an SST Fidelity Action Plan

- Completing the SST Training Program means that you had established fidelity at that time.
- An SST Fidelity Action plan helps you prevent fidelity drift.
- Let's talk about your SST Fidelity Action Plan.





Make an SST Fidelity Action Plan

- Be patient and honest with yourself as you consider your SST Groups and whether they are currently being led to fidelity. Take a baseline assessment.
- Consider what you are doing well AND what can be EVEN better.
- Recommendation once fidelity is achieved: rate your own fidelity (or have someone else rate it) on the SSGOC at least once every 3 months to reduce fidelity drift.
- Commit to at least one or two new ways to establish and/or maintain SST fidelity and take time now to write down your plan.





SST Training Program Contact

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Questions?





TMS

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- We encourage you to complete the TMS course survey today.





Thanks for joining us today!



